to the Government last year, "all rural Short Distance Charging Areas which are high cost areas, *i.e.* where total revenue is less than total cost, are to receive subsidy from Universal Service Fund to be created for this purpose". The Universal Service Fund has become operation w.e.f. 1.4.2002.

Difficulties in Garuda WLL Mobile Service

1639. SHRI SANJAY NIRUPAM: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether MTNL, Mumbai is facing any problems of difficulties in Garuda WLL Mobile Service, while operating in Mumbai;

(b) if so, the details of the difficulties and the complaints received by MTNL from consumers; and

(c) what action has been taken to improve the service?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRIMATI SUMITRA MAHAJAN): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. Delails of difficulties faced and complaints received from the customers of Garuda WLL Mobile Service operating in Mumbai with the action taken are given below:

1. Coverage problems in certain areas: Many complaints were received regarding improper coverage, most of these complaints are pertaining to a western suburbs of Mumbai wherein *site optimization* has been carried out and new base station site is also added on 13-7-2002.

2. Service outage complaints: Garuda network services were disrupted as a result of malfunctioning of BSC equipment on many occasions between 07-06-2002 to 03-07-2002. Experts from the equipment supplier (M/s. Fujitsu India Ltd.) were called from Japan and consequent upon some software upgradation by them, the network is stable since 04-07-2002. Experts from M/s. Fujitsu are still in Mumbai to further investigate and conclusively resolve the problem.

3. Call Congestion in Kalbadevi Area: As a result of *concentrated* subscriber presence in Kalbadevi locality, the call failure rate on account of heavy telephone traffic is more in Kalbadevi Area. *Site optimization* has already been taken up to minimize the call failure rate.

4. Handset quality complaints: Complaints regarding bad quality of the handset have been received from subscribers who were given Hyundai make WLL handset by MTNL.The case has already been taken up with the handset supplier.

5. Ring back tone complaints: When Garuda Mobile is switched off/out of coverage area, calling party is getting a ring back tone. Many customer's complaints are received in this connection. Equipment supplier that is M/s. Fujitsu have recently implemented some software patch and the period of ring back tone in such cases is now reduced from 30 sec. to 15 sec. The cases presently being studied by experts of M/s. Fujitsu to extend a busy tone in such cases.

Basic telephone services by private companies in Mumbai

1640. SHRI SANJAY NIRUPAM: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether private players are allowed in Mumbai to provide basic telephone services;

(b) if so, who are these players and what is their market share so far as the connectivity is concerned;

(c) whether the private players are affecting the prospect of MTNL business in Mumbai; and

(d) if so, the proposal to strengthen the MTNL?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRIMATI SUMITRA MAHAJAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (d) M/s. Hughes Telecom (India) Ltd and M/s. Reliance Infocomm Ltd. have been granted licence to operate basic telephone service in Maharashtra service area including Mumbai. At present only M/s. Hughes Tele, com (India) Ltd. is operational and is serving 4.958% of total telephones being provided by basis telephone service providers within the jurisdiction of MTNL, Mumbai. With the opening of telecom service sector to competition in a dynamic environment, all players including MTNL are expected to devise their own strategies for providing better services and facilities to subscribers at competitive prices.